

REPORT:

One day event at LLU+, LSBU (May 19th 2004)

ESOL in the Voluntary Sector

1. Introduction

On Wednesday 19th May, LLU+ (formerly the London Language and Literacy Unit) at London South Bank University held a one day free event focussing on ESOL in the voluntary sector, in the new LLU+ Central London Skills for Life Professional Development Centre.

It was funded through ASSET UK (ESF Equal) and the Central London Skills for Life Professional Development Centre at LLU+, LSBU.

The event was for ESOL teachers and coordinators of ESOL provision working in voluntary sector organisations.

2. Aims

- to provide an opportunity for networking and an information exchange about ESOL provision in the voluntary sector
- to provide a Skills for Life update
- to identify key issues for ESOL providers in the voluntary sector and explore ways forward
- to consult voluntary sector organisations offering ESOL provision to ensure that LLU+ meets the professional development needs of the sector in relation to Skills for Life
- to offer a tour of the Central London Skills for Life Professional Development Centre
- through workshops, to offer the opportunity to explore 'Differentiation' or 'Using a learning styles approach to teaching and learning'
- to provide an exhibition of materials/resources for teaching/learning and professional development (including books, materials, videos, online training etc. from a variety of sources)

3. Programme

- Registration, tea & coffee, market place

9.30 – 12.45

- Information exchange about ESOL provision & ice-breaker
- Welcome, aims for the day, programme & housekeeping
- Skills for Life overview or update
- The current ESOL work of LLU+
- Tea & Coffee, market place
- Discussion groups: ESOL in the voluntary sector- key issues, training & support
- Introduction to the LLU+ Central London Skills for Life Professional Development Centre

12.45 – 2.00

- Lunch
- Tour of the LLU+ Central London Skills for Life Professional Development Centre
- Market place

2.00 – 4.00

- PDC tour follow up
- Workshops:
 - Differentiation
 - OR
 - Using a learning styles approach to teaching & learning in the ESOL classroom
- Review of the day & evaluations
- Tea & coffee, market place

4. List of organisations attending

4.1 51 People attended from the following 43 organizations:

Arab Women Group
Ashburham Community Centre
Blackfriars Settlement
Blythe Neighborhood Council
CARLA Latin American Welfare Group
CAVE
Central London LSC
Charterhouse-In-Southwark
East London ITEC
East London Skills
Education Action International
Education and Training Consortium
Genuine Empowerment of Mothers in Society
Harmony House
HMP Pentonville
Hoxton Bibliotech
Iranian Association
Latin American Women's Rights (LAWRS)
Lewisham Community Development
LWTS
Migrants Resource Centre
Open College Network
Refugee Council

Somali Welfare & Cultural Association
South London Tamil Welfare Group
Southwark Muslim Women's Association
Springboard
Springboard Hackney
St.Marys Magdalene's Centre for Asylum Seekers
The Baytree Centre
The Cardinal Hume Centre
The Women's Day Centre
Turkish Women's Welfare Association
UCRA
Vietnamese Women's Group
Waaberi Cultural Association
Wandsworth Borough Council
WEA (no area specified)
WEA Reading
WEA South Eastern District
WEA/Open Door
Westway Development Trust
Workforce Academy

4.2 People from the following 2 organizations provided stalls in the market place and participated in the discussion groups about key issues/training and support needs for ESOL providers in the voluntary sector:

Miriam Sampson and Helen Camplin from the Basic Skills Agency
Melanie Cook from Kings College London

5. Key issues for ESOL providers in the voluntary sector in terms of ESOL provision and delivery, identified by participants in discussion groups

5.1 Staffing

5.1.1 Difficulties in recruiting tutors (experienced and qualified).

5.1.2 Shortage of support assistants and volunteers.

5.2 Staff support

5.2.1 People from some small organisations explained that they do not have a dedicated ESOL coordinator and classes are set up by other staff in the organisation. ESOL teachers are then contracted to teach the classes. As a result, some organisations do not have dedicated ESOL support structures that teachers can refer to and use for advice/support in relation to specific ESOL issues. The ESOL teachers often carry out those coordinating tasks that require specialist ESOL knowledge. Some teachers working in this type of situation expressed a feeling of isolation, with no ESOL manager to refer to, and said that they would benefit from some specialist ESOL support and opportunities to discuss issues with ESOL tutors from other organisations.

5.2.2 The opportunity to meet other ESOL tutors from other organisations, to share good practice and discuss issues and concerns would be welcomed.

5.2.3 Organisations offer a lot of provision for beginners but there is a perceived lack of training, and of appropriate materials, qualifications/accreditation and assessment tools for working with very low level beginners particularly those with beginner literacy needs. People don't always know what training and resources are available.

5.2.4 Need for advice and information about supporting learners, in particular, information about who learners can be referred to for specialist advice, guidance and specialist support, for example, for a dyslexia assessment.

5.2.5 Difficulties in keeping a balance of paperwork and teaching.

5.3 Professional development

5.3.1 Need for tutor training and opportunities for professional development.

5.3.2 Organisations have the Skills for Life documents and tools (for example, those for assessment) and would like more support for their use.

5.3.3 Some people expressed a lack of confidence about how to incorporate employment issues into ESOL, including how to teach job search to ESOL students.

5.4 Funding issues

5.4.1 Difficulties experienced in obtaining funding & demonstrating to funders the diversity of needs & the challenges involved in meeting them, including the need for flexible differentiated teaching.

5.5 Management of provision

5.5.1 Some organisations expressed concerns around one or more of the following:

- student retention
- student attendance
- access to adequate resources, including technology
- access to adequate accommodation.

6. Training and support needs of ESOL teachers/coordinators, identified by participants in discussion groups

6.1 Staff support, Staffing and Management of provision

6.1.1 Opportunities for networking and peer support, in order to share good practice, and discuss issues and concerns with people from the same sector who share similar concerns.

6.1.2 Need for information, advice and guidance about professional development, including the new teacher training framework, rights to training, employers' responsibilities & obligations, how to support part-time tutors in getting qualifications.

6.1.3 Some people said that it would be useful to have access to an external advisor/supporter/mentor, that is, a type of peripatetic support who could act as a 'critical friend' and advise on provision and delivery, for example, lesson planning, schemes of work etc.

6.2 Professional development

6.2.1 Training needs to be flexible because of problems in obtaining cover. Suggestions regarding flexibility included: distance learning, modules, Saturday training.

6.2.2 Support/training for the use of the new *Skills for Life* documents and tools so that they are integrated into the teaching and learning cycle (for example, so that the tools for assessment are used to inform planning).

6.2.3 Training to support work with very low level beginners, particularly those with beginner literacy needs.

6.2.4 Training/support in how to incorporate employment issues into ESOL, including how to teach job search to ESOL students.

6.2.5 Need for one off training sessions that are geared to voluntary sector, so that people are able to share ideas with people from the same sector who have similar concerns and issues. Ideas for specific training events:

- Advice and guidance
- ICT & ESOL
- Building in employment issues into ESOL including, how to teach job search
- Effective use of ILPs to improve delivery
- Developing schemes of work
- Developing embedded courses
- Teaching basic literacy
- Good practice: recruitment, assessment, progression etc
- Working with volunteers
- Dyslexia and ESOL

6.3 Funding issues

6.3.1 Support to obtain funding.

6.3.2 Support to gain clarity about what funders are looking for, and also to show them the diversity of learner needs and the challenges involved in meeting them, including the need for flexible differentiated teaching, and issues around retention and attendance.

7. Feedback from the evaluations completed by participants, which link with the training and support needs identified by participants

An analysis of the evaluations supports the training and support needs raised in the discussion groups. Extensive reference was made to the usefulness of the workshops, both for people's own teaching and for dissemination to others in their organisations, and also to the value of the opportunities offered for networking. This signals the importance of networking and training to ESOL teachers and coordinators working in the voluntary sector:

In answer to the question *What did you find most useful?* networking and the workshop (differentiation or learning styles) were the two most frequently mentioned parts of the day.

27% of people included networking in their reply (the most useful/one of the most useful things), 66% of people included the workshops in their reply (the most useful/one of the most useful things). 7.5% of people said that the day as a whole was useful. People also referred to the following: general overview of the voluntary sector (2.5%); seeing materials (2.5%); general information (2.5%); discussions about key issues, training and support for the voluntary sector (5%); update on *Skills for Life* (12%); seeing what is on offer at LLU+/PDC (getting information and/or seeing resources, materials etc.) (19.5%).

A few of the comments made in answer to the question *What did you find most useful?*:

"The differentiation workshop was particularly useful and I was able to get some really good tips which I can see my self applying to some of my classes."

"This event provided the opportunity to meet people in similar set-ups with a wide range of experiences. This was very helpful. It was also very good to learn about LLU+ and existing facilities and resources."

"Materials in the resource rooms, linking up with other ESOL practitioners. A general overview of the voluntary sector and how everyone functions within it was very interesting."

"Identifying learning styles, analysing the training & support needs of ESOL providers on the voluntary sector."

"Finding out about what is on offer at the centre."

8. Conclusions and way forward

LLU+ is going to set up a Voluntary sector ESOL network (first meeting in autumn 2004). The aim is to have 3 half day meetings a year (autumn, spring, summer), and to offer a workshop following each meeting.

It was suggested that feedback from the event is circulated to other Professional Development Centres, as some people at the event came from outside London and it is unlikely that they would be able to take advantage of the voluntary sector ESOL network that LLU+ is going to set up.

Pauline Moon
June 25th 2004